



**BRIGHT LIGHTS (CD)**  
NILS WOGRAM (solo)  
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## NILS WOGRAM || BRIGHT LIGHTS

A trombone, nothing else! What has long been normal on piano or guitar, for example, still seems unusual, not to say daring, on the trombone. Yet this unusual line-up has a long tradition in German jazz. Both Albert Mangelsdorff and Conny Bauer have demonstrated this and presented their instrument as a solo instrument on several style-defining albums and in countless solo concerts. With his solo debut *Bright Lights*, Nils Wogram not only hooks up with this great tradition, but at the same time opens up completely new perspectives.

Nils Wogram has not had to prove his musical ability for a long time. With his bands Root 70 and Nostalgia he has made a name for himself worldwide, and in countless other projects – alongside Simon Nabatov, Bojan Z. or Michel Portal, among others – he has established himself as a team player of strong character. He brings to the ear what he wants to hear himself. In the Vertigo Trombone Quartet or in a duo with Conny Bauer, he has already explicitly featured the sound of the trombone. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, it was only a question of time when Wogram would also postulate his relationship to the solo trombone. In contrast to the aforementioned

pioneers of this subject, he no longer has to position his instrument in the club of solo instruments, but can simply play it.

In other words, Wogram doesn't need to provide an instruction leaflet for the music of *Bright Lights* to explain why he is even recording a solo album at all. He doesn't have to prove anything, doesn't have to thread together the playful possibilities of the trombone and its improvisational derivations song for song, but rather he can cheerfully and entertainingly blow his very own stories through the tube. Although Wogram relies on a single sound source without technical aids or devices, his artistic maxim is as integrative as playing with a large band. Any form of dogmatism is fundamentally foreign to him. His aim on *Bright Lights* is to incorporate as many creative means as possible and not to exclude, omit or even prevent certain parameters. *"I find avoidance strategies in music exhausting and artificial,"* Wogram clarifies. *"I believe that you hear the trombone solo differently than you do on a band album. In a band, there is much more variety in sound and a division of functions, which in the context of Bright Lights must be operated by a single instrument. I definitely didn't want to fall into the trap of complacency. The listener shouldn't have to constantly bear in mind that all he hears is trombone. It's all about interesting and varied music."*

Wogram already worked occasionally on solo projects in the past. But his previous programs were based more on the improvisational conditions of the instrument. For *Bright Lights* he found a new approach, one in which he focused more on the narrative qualities of his horn. To make them as broad and varied as possible, he penetrated much deeper into the trombone's bag of tricks than before. While doing this, he always focused on what the respective creative means for each individual song were.

This narrative aspect lends itself more to the trombone than to any other instrument, for no sound generator comes as close to the human voice as Wogram's playing apparatus. He knows about these possibilities and uses them as an opportunity. *"The character of the trombone is extremely changeable. I like it when the trombone retains its basic character. Of course I too often succumb to the tendency to play the trombone as purely as possible, but its charm lies not least in its certain roughness and linguistic mutability. I love it when the trombone comes across as slightly melancholy and flattering. In the past I tried to play Coltrane's "Giant Steps". I succeeded, but the trombone is not a tenor saxophone, and you have to be careful not to let the character of the instrument fade into the background. If the tone is not quite straight, that is also one of the trombone's special features."* Wogram also deliberately plays with the instrument's limitations. As if in free flight he overcomes the trombone's gravity, but instead of negating it, he skillfully transforms its relative heaviness in the lift of musical thermodynamics into a flying carpet from which his stories fly over to the listener lightly and elegantly like swifts. His playing thus becomes airy, colorful and three-dimensional.

To tell what he wants to say with the unaccompanied trombone, Nils Wogram needs less than 40 minutes on *Bright Lights*. He is not interested in his personal standing as a player or virtuoso. As in all his other projects, his ego completely recedes behind the music, which in turn makes him all the stronger as a musical individual. It is precisely this characteristic that triggers the strength of this recording. This trombonist certainly has had the playing skills for a solo album for at least a decade and a half. According to Wogram, however, it was and is a continuous process of self-critical learning to leave out everything in his solo playing that stands in the way of the musical narrative. *"One must be aware,"* says Wogram, *"that the external effect often deviates from how one perceives oneself. It requires a lot of self-confidence to always make decisions in the spirit of the music, all the more so when no external producer is involved. Sometimes this also means making radical decisions against the pure musician's view. And that is something you have to learn."*

As demanding as this solo album is playful, Wogram does not, however, address himself exclusively to trombone gourmets with this album, but to listeners of all colors who can simply enjoy inventive musical storytelling. In this sense, *Bright Lights* is neither an acrobatic revue nor a showcase for the trombone, and certainly not a retrospective test of strength with his idols Mangelsdorff or Bauer, to whom Wogram certainly feels that bowing to them is a challenge for the album. In a very simple sentence he sums up his credo: *"I am not interested in analyzing my craft, but solely in artistic substance."*

A trombone, nothing else! Nils Wogram succeeds in a touching way to manifest basic trust in his own musical statements, to confess his artistic origins without mutating into plagiarism, and thus to tell new stories that nevertheless do not seem out of place in familiar settings. Ultimately, with *Bright Lights* he is clearing the way for the creative power of socially sensitive individualism in times of increasing uniformity and conformity.

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